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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 12, 2018

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The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to request that you direct the Risk Management Agency to at a minimum extend the date for which interest begins to accrue or waive the interest charges on unpaid Multiple-peril Crop Insurance premiums (MCPI) in North Dakota counties that have recently experienced an early winter storm. In addition, because this disaster has the potential to prevent producers from harvesting their crop, I also request that you reevaluate the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) position that producers unable to harvest a crop are excluded from the Market Facilitation Program.

Starting the night of October 8, the counties of Barnes, Cass, Dickey, Grand Forks, Griggs, LaMoure, Nelson, Pembina, Ransom, Sargent, Steele, Traill, and Walsh were hit by a storm that dumped as much as 19 inches of snow. Many producers in this area have now experienced multiple rounds of snow, following a wet and challenging harvest season. This devastating weather has prevented farmers in these counties from being able to harvest their soybean crop, thus delaying much needed income and severely impacting rural economies.

Interest began incurring on MCPI premiums on October 1, but due to a lack of cash flow from a delayed harvest, many producers will have to wait a significant amount of time before they are able to pay their premium. Extending the deadline on the interest accrual or waiving the interest entirely would provide much needed relief for farmers who are facing significant challenges this year due to market loss, extreme weather, and depressed prices.

I also ask that you reconsider your position to exclude farmers who are unable to harvest a crop due to weather conditions from participating in the Market Facilitation Program, particularly in light of this significant weather event. We must ensure this program remains committed to its intended purpose of aiding producers who have been impacted by this trade war, and not exclude those who have experienced further hardship beyond their control.

I hope that you will take these considerations into account, and act swiftly in order to bring some certainty to farmers who have been under immense stress and pressure this year. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate

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